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ABSTRACT

In the winter of 1969, the "Harvard Education Review" published an article by Arthur Jensen that suggested that racial and social class IQ differences were primarily due to hereditary factors. From the point of view of the opposition, this report reviews the controversy that ensued, including Jensen's original statements, the critics' rebuttals, and Jensen's defenses. It is pointed out that Jensen's explanations have failed to satisfy critics who have cited erroneous statistical transpositions and selective attention to co-twin studies. It is suggested that the whole affair be forgotten and attention turned towards improving the conditions of the poor and providing quality education for all. (MH)

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PERSPECTIVE ON THE JENSEN AFFAIR

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Now that the dust has about settled on the Jensen controversy, it behooves us, perhaps, to search for the underlying causes of the conflagration, to try to repair the damage done to the children involved and to determine that public Indian wrestling of this sort must never happen again.

The latter determination will be the hardest. Heredity-environment arguments seem to erupt every twelve or thirteen years. I have no ready explanation for this. I am tempted to blame it on the appearance of sunspots.

These things do seem crystal clear:

1. The Jensen Affair resulted from the compounding of one or two basic and seemingly honest errors.

2. The controversy has been placed in proper perspective by statements from officials of the American Psychological Association, the American Genetics Association, by comment from Jensen's colleagues, and by comment from Jensen himself.

3. It is time to ring down the curtain on the argument and get back to making schools work for poor children.

The compounded errors were committed first by the editorial board of the Harvard Educational Review in failing to call in outside help to thoroughly edit the manuscript, and by Jensen's insistence on slanting the piece so severely as to insure its failure to pass the test objectivity. Students run HER--completely--and in this situation they were simply in over their heads.

As a result of all of this, Jensen has had to shift his positions, constantly it seems, thereby creating utter confusion and disarray in all quarters. Statements of clarifications, reversals and retreats from his original positions have been recorded in the Summer issue of HER, in interviews for Science Digest,

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and a full issue of the New York Times Magazine and in a letter to a subsequent issue of the latter.

What, then, (hopefully for the last time) did Jensen say? When? Where?

In his original article in the Winter 1969 issue of HER Dr. Jensen begins by accusing workers and supporters of compensatory of attempting to violate all laws of individual differences and raise (or lower) all children to a median level of achievement and intelligence--a sort of homogenization process as it were. He then stated rather sternly that this was not possible due to the hereditary constraints involved and that he would prove this thesis in the next 122 pages of his article.

This, of course, is a straw man. Compensatory people are not ignoring individual differences in children. Nor are they engaged in a Great Test Race. They are trying to do what President Johnson charged them with doing in his statements in signing the various bills to run these programs: to make it so every child can get as much education as possible. The testing apparatus is only one of several means of trying to get feedback from the programs. It is not the most important means. Teacher judgements, grades, parent comment, school persistence and many other indices are used to good advantage in highly successful programs.

When apprised of this by rebuttals of a team of psychologists and geneticists in the Spring issue of HER, Dr. Jensen retreated from this accusation by explaining to a New York Times Magazine interviewer that he made the accusation to give emphasis and draw attention and interest to his article. He said his English teachers always urged him to begin his papers with a provocative statement.

Dr. Jensen then proceeded in his original article to re-hash the old co-twin studies of the nature-nuture controversy. He selected three of these studies and computed a simple heritability index involving an analysis of variance. He then claimed to have proved environment accounted for no more than twenty per cent of the development of the mature human's intelligence and that the other eighty per cent was a product of heredity.

Jensen's colleagues immediately pointed out the errors, inadequacies and general cant in his claims.

Martin Deutsch and his colleagues at the Institute for Developmental Studies at New York University identified seventeen statistical transpositions in Jensen's computations--all in favor of his heritability thesis. (See Fall 1969 issue of HER.)

Jensen also failed to analyze thoroughly one of the three classic co-twin studies(Newman, et al) he used as the mainstay for his heritability index. Ernest Hilgard and Richard Atkinson analyze the same study (in their Introduction to Psychology, Harcourt Brace) to show that environmental deprivation is indeed a potent factor in IQ development and measurement. Hilgard and Atkinson note that while most co-twin studies involve moving children into similar environment, four of the nineteen pairs in the Newman study were placed in widely contrasting environments. Like suddenly becoming poor, turning black and taking up residence in Sunflower County, Mississippi.

The resulting IQ scores were so different that, according to the authors, the entire correlation was dragged down significantly. Such a difference, if analyzed properly, would lower Jensen's heritability index considerably and shed light on the racial storm he managed to stir in still another set of comments.

The rebuttal team also reminded Dr. Jensen that an IQ gene a s such has never been identified and may not exist.

When apprised of these errors in the rebuttals, Jensen stated in the Summer 1969 issue of HER that he did not seek to be definitive and all-inclusive here but that he was attempting to re-assert the importance of heredity in human development. He stated that this concept had been pushed into the background by the environmentalists over the past decade or so and that he simply wanted teachers and others to consider heredity when confronted with individual differences in children. Another straw man.

In an astonishing statement for this day and time, Dr. Jensen then assured his headlines and controversy by toying with the hypothesis that black people thought differently from white people and citing one or two studies showing gaps in black-white IQ scores.

The analysis here was brief and far from objective. I looked in vain, for example, for treatment of the half dozen or so classical studies showing black-white comparability in IQ scores. In scholarly, objective articles on this subject, these always find a place. None did here--even in the bibliography.

Omitted were such classics as H. A. Tanser's work showing black-white IQ comparability in rural Kent County, Ontario, Eli Ginsberg's Negro Potential showing black soldiers from some states scoring higher than white soldiers from some states in World War II testing and the works of Otto Klineberg and E. S. Lee which documented big jumps in the IQ of Negro children when taken north from southern farms and villages.

In addition, I received a form letter from Dr. Jensen in answer to my request for clarification of his real stand on race and IQ. Jensen stated in this letter that his main interest was in ethnic learning styles.

Further, Jensen complained to interviewers from Science Digest that he devoted less than five percent of his article to race but that 95 percent of the news coverage was on this subject.

I will never understand why he failed to include some of this material, however. We now find, for example, that the school with the highest IQ in the largest city in Jensen's own state is 90 percent black (see the January 1970 issue of Phi Delta Kappa for a report for Windsor Hill School in Los Angeles).

Startled and confused at being denounced as a white supremacist by his colleagues and embraced as one by Klan-type groups, Jensen denied this in the Summer 1969 issue of HER and to the consternation of some Birch-type groups, declared that Oriental people were superior in abstract intelligence. When last seen, he was trying to explain this to the second group.

Jensen also softened his stand on black inferiority by attributing black-white IQ gaps to large black slum families and small black middle class families. He emphasized his belief that there are no yellow, black or white IQ genes as such but only IQ genes.

Finally, and most cruelly, Jensen said that compensatory education had failed and that eugenics were the long range and manual training the short range answer to people mired in poverty. A page from Hermann Goering's notebook.

When apprised of the fact that he had literally ignored thousands upon thousands of success stories, Dr. Jensen reversed his position and stated in a letter to a fall issue of the New York Times Magazine and in an interview with an editor of U. S. News and World Report that compensatory education had not failed, that it could help poor children learn better and that it could raise test scores where people considered these as being very important in

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the educative process. He claimed that he meant to imply in his original article that compensatory education had been spread too far too fast and that model research and development should precede Federal grants to operate the programs.

What to do. I suggest we write the whole thing off as one of those natural disasters which come along from time to time. And at the risk of some unemployment in the measurement industry, I suggest that psychologists take the advice of the National Academy of Sciences, i.e., suspend racial comparisons on tests until black, brown and red people match white people in jobs, income, housing, quality of education and, most important, in respect and in complete participation in the day-to-day affairs of the country. We should make the same suspension for any child who is growing up poor.

I suggest, also, that we heed the advice of concerned educators who urge us to eliminate IQ tests from the schools and that we follow the lead of those school systems who are building their testing programs around readiness, achievement and diagnostic testing. The problems caused by IQ tests far outweigh any possible good they can ever do in the schools.

Some defense lawyers are using Jensen's original statements in desegregation cases. They should be dis-barred for malpractice.

Some administrators and government officials are slackening the pace and vigor in planning and executing programs of instruction for poor children. They should be fired.

Teachers with poor children in their classrooms should re-dedicate themselves to making it so these children can get all the education they can. One Doubting Thomas must not derail us in our drive to bring this about.

This job can be done.

This job must be done.

I believe this job will be done.